Fellowship in Prayer

"For a world united in prayer"

...The greatest happiness for a lover is to converse with his beloved, and the greatest gift for a seeker is to become familiar with the object of his longing.

That is why the greatest hope of every soul who is attracted to the Kingdom of God is to find an opportunity to entreat and supplicate before his Beloved, appeal for His mercy and grace, and be immersed in the ocean of His utterance...

— *Baha'i Writings.*

Volume IX AUGUST, 1959 Number 4

OUR PURPOSE

"To promote the practice of prayer among *all* religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God, regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind."

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

22 E. 29th Street New York 16, N.Y.

Volume IX August, 1959 Number 4

PRAYER FOR SUMMER

God and Father, we thank Thee for the beauty of this season.

We thank Thee for nature's rebirth, following winter's desolation. May we see, in the burgeoning life about us, sign and symbol of the deathlessness of man.

Open our ears to hear in the bird's sweet song, in the rhythmic pounding of the surf, in the rustle of wind through trees in bloom, Thy voice calling us to duty.

Open our eyes that we may see in the multicolored blossoms, in the sunrise and sunset, in sunlight bright with promise, Thy finger directing life onward and upward.

Open our hearts that we may feel Thy love always.

We thank Thee for Thy bounty and ask that we may have the power and strength to be Thy worthy partners in the continuous work of creation. Amen.

— Rabbi Edward E. Klein
Stephen Wise Free Synagogue
New York City.

SECOND THOUGHTS ON THE RELIGIOUS REVIVAL

In this postwar period widespread publicity has been given to evident signs of a religious revival taking place in America, and we are thinking now especially of the work of evangelists and the immense throngs that come to hear them. No one can deny that there are signs on all sides reflecting a great dissatisfaction with the deadening values of materialism and a hunger for something higher and more ennobling in life. Perhaps there has never been an age since the Reformation when people were so receptive to religious truth as ours. The very existence of this publication may be regarded in this light, for FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER could never have appeared in any age except the present one.

Religious people may with reason be gratified at this trend and feel that, from a religious standpoint alone, this is an incomparably exciting period in which to live. We concur in this mood. But we must disagree with some of the basic assumptions that have mobilized all these hopes.

First of all, we wonder whether the emotional atmosphere generated by evangelists in crowded arenas is the proper setting to begin a spiritual life, and whether the "decisions for Christ" publicly declared on such occasions are in fact anything more than an emotional response to mere oratory. No prophet or great spiritual leader has ever depended upon the arts of the orator to win people to religion. All of them without exception have drawn people by their saintliness, their character, and the example of their lives. There is indeed, as most of us discover eventually, no other way to make a lasting impression on the human mind. Evangelism and its practictioners excites people and gives them a momentary conviction of religious awakening, but it has been found that such sudden conversions, if we may call them such, have no substance and do not last.

In this sense evangelism, in the light of its consequences, may be regarded as deception, for it leads people to believe that religious conversion and the life they are told will open up for them, will be an easy path to tread. Those now living that life know that such is far from the case. Though it is a life foreordained for all of us, it is a life of struggle, of renunciation, of constant battle with ourselves.

To embark on such a life is a step to be taken with the utmost solemnity and the "decision" to take it must be weighed in the silence of the individual's heart, when he is more alone than at any other time. It is something to be done least of all in a crowd, when our senses are temporarily aroused, and our intellect and power of discrimination are clouded.

An equally serious consideration is the dogmatic approach to religion that all evangelists, at this late date in history, still rely upon. They declare that only their way is the true way, only the doctrines they preach are truth, and thus perpetuate a method of religious teaching which, in this century, is growing more and more archaic to vast numbers of seeking, uncommitted people. The appeal to dogma and tradition can never again be successful in persuading people to turn to religion when everything else has failed them. We believe it has had its day and that history is telling us this in an unmistakeable manner. Some other kind of religious orientation, some quite different, still evolving approach to the whole spiritual life, must be sought and discovered to meet the needs of people in this century and in the generations that follow us. If dogma and traditionalism were still suitable to modern man there would have been no need for the great number of experimental religious groups that have recently come to birth in America. Their existence is a convincing sign that too much has been found wanting in the old way of approaching religion.

A religious revival—let us say a spiritual revival—is a good and necessary thing, but we do not believe it can be accomplished by mass meetings, emotionalism and oratory. It will depend primarily on the courage and strength of people already entered upon the spiritual life, by whose example and words and prayers others will be drawn to follow them irresistibly. That is why we always emphasize the necessity of prayer and meditation practiced by the individual, rather than a reliance upon the authority of scriptures or church doctrines. We have seen too many great people produced outside the limits of any dogma, or any church for that matter, to be persuaded any longer that a belief in dogmas and doctrines is the sole or even the principal way to salvation and divine enlightenment.

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THE SECRET IS TO SURRENDER

By Thomas E. Powers

"Surrender .... Leave everything entirely to Him"

— RAMANA MAHARSHI.

When I was between twenty-nine and thirty-five years old, I got into real trouble. I became sick, at first seriously and then hopelessly. My life began to run downhill toward a dead end. I wanted desperately to come out of it and to get well, but I didn't know how.

On the way downhill I met people coming up. These were people who had been where I was and who had found the way out. I could plainly see that they had the answer. They were alive with it. You couldn't argue against it, any more than you can argue against a rainstorm or a beefsteak. But when they told me what the answer actually was, I couldn't understand what they were saying.

They said: "The secret is to surrender to God. All you have to do is turn your life over to Him and let Him direct you in everything."

I had already tried praying to God. I won't say that nothing came of it; but not enough came of it; I was still sick. These people said that before you could pray well (if your need was urgent and practical) it was necessary to surrender.

So I began to chew and struggle over the idea of surrender. And I began to be afraid of it. I thought that if you *could* surrender it might lead not to recovery but to irresponsibility, indifference, or some sort of collapse. At the very least it seemed a difficult and doubtful business.

Then one day when my need was great enough and I wanted it enough, in a moment of gracious understanding I saw that surrender is not something complicated and brainy and grown-up. Surrender on the contrary is something simple and direct and childlike. So much so that you have to find the child in yourself before you can do it. Otherwise you balk at it or make a hash out of it.

At the same time I saw that there *is* a real, living child in every man. This is not a special deal for poets, preachers, and psychologists. It is simply a fact of everyone's being. Most of us think we have left the child behind, that his existence is buried

in our past. The child in the average man no doubt *is* buried, but not in the past. He is buried in the present, under the mountain of adult conceit. And he can be reached in the present.

Now I believe—more than that, now I know—that Christ's advice to turn and become as a little child is strictly practical advice, to be taken quite literally. For when you do take it so, the way to surrender to God lies open. You begin to be able to understand and to obey such words as these:

Surrender to Him and abide by His will whether He appears or vanishes; await His pleasure. If you ask Him to do as you please, it is not surrender but command to Him. You cannot have Him obey you and yet think you have surrendered. He knows what is best and when and how to do it. Leave everything entirely to Him. His is the burden; you have no longer any cares. All your cares are His.

Far from leading to irresponsibility, surrender to God commits you to the most athletic responsibility a human being can assume. Far from leading to indifference or weakness, surrender to God plunges you into the heart of the human situation, where only the strong can stand. The fact that you yourself are healed in the process becomes incidental. The work of mankind becomes your concern, because it is God's concern.

Here is the greatest of paradoxes: Surrender to God is the key to victory in life. And the victory which God has prepared for humanity is so great that only a God-enlightened and God-supported person can endure the incredible reality of it. »»»»

There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows, and in miseries...
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.

— Shakespeare.

THE RELATION BETWEEN THE MENTAL AND THE SPIRITUAL

By W. J. Thompson, D.D.

Mental illness is taking a greater toll in the United States today than ever before. Over one half of all hospital patients are being treated for mental ills. According to Roger W. Babson, noted statistician, one out of every ten Americans will be in a mental hospital sometime or other. A recent newspaper editorial reads: "Strangely enough, we who are so proud of our technical achievements, our atomic bomb, our faster than sound speed in air travel, and our marvelous progress in electronics, are still in the horse and buggy days as far as our knowledge of mental health goes."

It is indeed astonishing that many persons, who are regarded as intelligent and quick to understand, fail to realize the terrible consequences of anger, selfishness, and contempt for others. The truth is that continual bitterness of disposition leads to sickness. The more we worry the less we are able to handle our difficulties with success. By worry we sap our strength, blunt our initiative and plunge ourselves into a mood out of which nothing creative can emerge. Worry is self-inflicted torture which defeats its own ends, and seriously affects physical welfare.

Someone may ask, "What is the matter with us these days? So many people are 'touchy' sensitive, self-centered, and so unhappy they can hardly live with themselves, much less with others, without friction." Surely this is much more than a problem for the physician or psychiatrist. It is a revelation of man's deeper need of faith in God.

At the very moment the amazing scientific progress of our time is putting undreamed-of power in our hands, we seem more powerless to manage ourselves. Man is "twisted" on the inside, tied in knots he cannot unravel. To change the figure, he is a walking Civil War, and until that war is won there will be no peace.

"Spiritual conditions are inseparably connected with our physical and mental well-being," says A. B. Simpson. "One hour of fretting will wear out more vitality than a week of work. One low desire or rankling jealousy will hurt more than a sip of poison. We do not wonder that some people have poor health when we hear them talk, for they have

enough prejudices, doubts, dislikes, and fears to exhaust the strongest constitution. Sweetness of spirit, joyfulness of heart, and true faith in God are essential to full health."

The toxin of fatigue has been demonstrated, and the poisons generated by evil temper, emotional upsets, fear of disease or misfortune, and lack of spiritual belief are known to exist, and can affect our entire being. But the situation is far from hopeless. While we are grateful for help and guidance from psychology and psychiatry, we need more than these powers. The way to get rid of tension, frustration and mental disturbance is to kneel before the Lord, confess wrong thinking and wrong doing, seek forgiveness, and by His grace and guidance begin a new life. In the words of Dr. J. H. Jowett, "When the Light of Life falls upon the life of men, secret powers unfold, sleeping perceptions begin to awake, the whole being becomes alive unto God..."

SELF-ANSWERING PRAYER

By A. E. Johnson

"Did God answer your prayer?"--"Yes. He said No."

A great deal of use has been made of this episode, perhaps too much. For the idea presents a caricature of God as a constant assessor of every human petition, and of answering or not answering accordingly. But prayer is much more than this. As a recent editorial in FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER so well said: "Prayer is a means to nothing... it is an end in itself."

Prayer is essentially an attitude, a rapport. As such it can never be ineffectual. Only from this point of view can we understand and practise St. Paul's injunction to "pray without ceasing," which becomes a glorious possibility when defined as a positioning, an involvement.

Let us appreciate in this connection that the title of this publication isnot FELLOWSHIP *OF*, but FELLOWSHIP *IN* PRAYER. My prayer life is impacted by your prayer life, and by his and hers; each of us is spiritually reinforced, and, as always, the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts.

Now although this perpetual, organic functioning of prayer has not been sufficiently stressed, the idea is cer-

tainly not new. In the 17th century we find Fenelon, Archbishop of Cambrai, praying: "I yield myself to Thee; I would have no other desire than to accomplish Thy will. Teach me to pray. Pray Thyself in me." —Pray Thyself in me. Yes, when all is said, it is God who prays in and through us. God is not only "the author and perfector of our faith," but of our praying also.

We pray naturally; prayer is the vernacular of the children of God. It is, one might say, our Father tongue. Nor is it presumptuous to think that we may even constitute the lips of God, and that it was for this end we were created. In the third century B.C., we have the Greek poet Cleanthes praying:

Thine be the fruit of the lips,
Who permittest all flesh to
address Thee...

Similarly Isaiah has God saying, "I create the fruit of the lips," a lovely expression which might well be made a prayer for all speakers and writers: "Create Thou the fruit of my lips."

If these considerations have any validity, it follows that the question of prayer answered or not answered becomes almost irrelevant. In other words, all great prayer is self-answering.

George Meredith wrote: "Who rises from prayer a better man, his prayer is answered." This is close to the heart of the matter, but still it is not enough. Prayer may indeed make us "feel better," but this aesthetic quality would be incidental. Prayer, for instance, is not a means to health; it is health—both the claim to and the enjoyment of health.

The brief but surcharged collect for the sixth Sunday after Trinity in the Book of Common Prayer affords a good example of self—answering prayer: "O God, who hast prepared for those who love thee such good things as pass man's understanding; pour into our hearts such love toward thee, that we, loving thee above all things, may obtain thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Having prayed thus, one does not "feel better"; indeed one might feel convicted, especially at the words "loving thee above all things" (where one's prior thoughts had been, say, on money). But this collect is a splendid capturing of how prayer operates, with an immediacy beyond the speed of light. Where Love becomes vocal (which is prayer) God himself, we may believe, hears music. »»»»

THE NEED OF A SPIRITUAL REVIVAL

By Swami Ritajananda

Perhaps humanity never faced such an agonizing situation as it is facing now. To all thinking people it appears that we are more unhappy than all our forefathers, in spite of having more comfort and conveniences. Why are we not able to establish peace on earth and goodwill among men? This might have been easier for people in ancient times when they were small, isolated groups, but now our life is related to societies we have not seen and cultures entirely different from ours. For the first time in the history of the world, we have come to recognize that our happiness depends upon the welfare of the remote Burmese and Chinese.

None more than the people of this country have seen the problem in its vastness and complication. We have discovered that all the great moral beliefs get rude shocks when we move in the crowds of hungry and suffering humanity. We never thought a good deed would be interpreted as an exploitation, and generosity as bribery.

Secondly, the modern world civilization is that of science and technology. These helped the Western nations to build vast empires and impress the peoples of Asia and Africa with their powers. The influence of the West has opened the eyes of those countries to nationalism, and an appreciation of science and its usefulness in their welfare. A sense of nationalism has become highly developed throughout the world. Along with it, a hatred for everything that has even a remote connection with colonialism is seen in many countries. States which were under foreign domination are keenly aware of their wretched condition and have come to believe that it can be improved only by adopting the outlook of science and accepting technological methods.

As a result some of these countries may forsake all that is valuable in their culture and become highly industrialized in order to expand their economic opportunities, improve their living standards, and remove illiteracy. Thus, in both East and West the modern outlook has become similar. There is the dominant note of attaining power.

Religion, at least in its

old forms, has lost its popularity. The power it wielded over societies throughout the world has declined. Religious persecutions can no longer be conducted by any church against a person as in olden times. Religion has to adapt to changing conditions and give greater freedom to people. There was a time when people could get from religion a compensation for what they missed in life, but it was backed by faith. Now this faith has died in the hearts of many, and man finds himself thrown into a chaotic ocean of conflicting forces and is developing a variety of philosophies.

We should not grumble against all this. We have to face facts and be aware that life is a changing phenomenon, and depends upon numerous external factors and our reactions to them. No one set of approaches can be said to be the eternal correct one for all people for all times. With the expanded view of life in front of us, as presented by international relationships along with the knowledge gained through science and technology, we have to make a new start in life, which will bring the greatest good to us, satisfying both the head and the heart.

The more we observe the modern world, we see how helpless we have become in the hands of the instruments we have made ourselves. Reevaluation of ideas has to be made and scrutinized to find new means of bettering our life. The contemporary situation is indeed a challenge to all we have learned through the centuries, to our ethical ideals and the desire for the establishment of peace on earth. Some have lost all faith and have become fatalists, and do not hope for any higher development. Some hope for the arrival of the Messiah, and others eagerly anticipate the final destruction of the whole world. But if we can find a new way of looking at life, of giving it a new set of values, we may have no fears of future calamities.

Our discoveries and progress in material knowledge have given us a sense of the powers of man, which for so long we have used only in certain areas and have neglected others completely. The time has come to see what they are. We can not only admire a Buddha or a Christ, but also see what is the power behind them that has made them revered even after thousands of years by people who may have no interest in the religion that has formed round their life and words.

Man's struggle for mastery

over nature is the predominant note of our modern world. Religions, wherever we see them, have one ideal: not the control of external nature, but the inner nature. Its areas of exploration are not related to the outside space world, but the depths of the human personality from where alone come the qualities that make a man great, a man loved, adored and worshipped. This is the core of religion. We must go and seek the power that makes a man a Buddha or a Christ, a St. Francis or a Ramakrishna. Many old scientific theories have been discarded and even many religious dogmas have become out of date. But these people are still bright luminaries. They seem to be the eternally fresh flowers in the garden of the world. Life had a meaning to them and it can still give a meaning to us. We are housed and clothed differently, but we are still human and react to higher sentiments in the same manner as they.

Great revivals in spiritual life occurred in olden times wherever different traditions met. It may be true that we are now in one stage of evolution, where there is a great mingling of different cultures, that we can compare notes and separate the essentials from the non-essentials. We can now see the background of different concepts of religions and see how different cultures, in spite of using different religious symbols, yet reached the same high spiritual ideal.

Many may still think of their old orthodox faith as the best religious ideal, but the modern world seems to break all these ideas as unfit for the needs of the times. We see what great religions throughout the world have contributed. We no longer brand the non-Christians as pagans and heathens, nor do the Hindus consider the non-Hindus as the "mlecchas" (foreigners). We have come to recognize that religion to be useful must have a flow. No stagnant water is fit to drink and no dogmatic religion can help the progress of a race.

In America, the meeting ground of different racial groups and divergent cultures, we see this urge for getting out of the old narrow religious ideals manifesting itself in the different religious groups that are working and in the numerous books both of fiction and non-fiction. It may be that sometimes false ideas may be masquerading as true ones, and materialistic philosophy may masquerade as divine truth. Yet they exhibit the hunger of modern man for

something new, something substantial and something more satisfactory. We are all seeking a religion which will not be against the spirit of science, which will foster humanist ideals, and which will lead to world unity.

Then the question is: how can this ideal work? How can you bring together the opposing religious philosophies of the Hindus and the Judeo-Christian tradition? How can we say that the image worshipper and those who consider all image-worship as blasphemous to be correct and meet on a common platform? Such questions can be multiplied, but we ought to remember that they are all related to the outer crust of religion. They do not have any meaning in the spiritual core of religion.

Religion can be seen from two different angles: one, as preaching a set of ideas and dogmas; and the other, a definite goal to be achieved. To many people, the belief is everything; to some, religion is an experiment that can be tried. Although both do talk of spirit, the spiritual aspect has a greater significance to the one who seeks to have a religious experience. The follower of the second aspect of religion works to get a full conviction of religious values by personal experience. During the Middle Ages, throughout the world, there was a great leaning toward this aspect. There were men and women who could talk on God and religious life with deep conviction. Now, the modern man mostly hears theology and tradition in places of worship, rather than a message of God from people who have gained their convictions from direct knowledge.

Only in the Eastern countries does religion as experience have a supreme importance. Now this idea is becoming popular all over the world. People have discovered that organized religion has not prevented wars or reduced evil. They have found that conformity to religious conventions does not bring the benefits which the old prophets predicted.

We ought to remember the distinction between the religious life and the spiritual life. The former, as we have seen, is closely associated with our beliefs and dogmas, with our feelings of fear and dependence. The spiritual life is related to our entire nature seeking a fulfillment, or as a river flowing toward the ocean. While every part of religious life is fixed by rules, the spiritual life seems to be beyond all regulations. Religion functions on

the earthly level, but the spiritual in a transcendental plane. The religious man is still a stranger in the mansion of God, seeks guides and is not sure of his whereabouts. The spiritual man walks in with boldness as if he is in his own home. God is no more a distant person to be revered, but He is here and now, permeating all his experiences.

This spiritual insight breaks all the barriers of the conscious mind and establishes it once and for all in a new kingdom all its own. It is not a destruction or an annihilation, but an expansion, where the subjective individual consciousness has a minor and insignificant role to play. The saint hardly speaks of what he has done or is going to do. He has no plans and no personal achievements. His joy is the joy of all and his heart melts at the suffering of anyone. This is not a cultivated attitude but a direct vision. His indifference to personal comforts is not a show of asceticism but a natural unawareness of the needs of the body. His neighbors are treated as his own self because he feels they are so.

These marks of a saint and the attributes of the divine are said to manifest in a person when he attains unity with the sublime. This is life's fulfillment. It is God realization. It is to be one with the Divine Spirit. A study of comparative religions makes it clear that they all ask us to renew contact with the spirit, and establish on a firm and lasting basis the contact we only get in odd moments of our lives.

From what we have observed, it seems that we have to look at religion from a new angle: not to think of only worshipping the incarnations or saints, but rather to *seek the power that manifested in them*. Not to think of this as a unique phenomenon that occurred thousands of years ago. Not to be satisfied kneeling at their feet in adoration and thinking we are people with religion. Let us remember their words. They wanted us to be perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect, and that should be our goal. The more we ponder on the saintliness than on the saint, it may be of greater help. Let us concentrate on the study of their lives, admire their qualities, and meditate upon them till our nature feels that these are our own way of life.

THE BEGINNINGS OF BUDDHISM

By the Honorable U Chan Htoon, Supreme Court of Burma

(The following is an excerpt from a talk on Buddhism delivered last August in Chicago at the Conference on Religious Freedom)

Buddhism...represents the rediscovery by the Buddha of the primal spiritual Truth which has been taught by innumerable Buddhas in previous world-cycles. The historical Buddha, Gotama, is not a solitary teacher or prophet; He is one of an endless line of Enlightened Beings, reaching from remotest times into immeasurable cycles of futurity. Buddhist cosmology teaches that time is beginningless; that universes arise and pass away in an endless succession, obedient to the cosmic law of cause and effect, and that, in the... periods of each world-cycle, certain highly-advanced beings attain supreme Enlightenment and Omniscience. They become Buddhas and teach the Buddha Dhamma, or Truth, for the welfare of all beings...

Two thousand five hundred years ago, when the Buddha-to-be was born as a prince...in northern India, religious beliefs had not hardened into dogma. Religion was conjoined with...philosophy, and there was a spirit of broad tolerance which embraced many schools of thought. In common with most of the ancient world, the majority of these schools accepted reincarnation as a basic fact. To thinking men it has always seemed impossible that life should come to an end with the disintegration of the physical body; and... it is equally difficult to imagine that it comes into being for the first time with physical birth.

Throughout nature there is a principle of continuity in change which we are able to sense within ourselves, and it is this which has given rise to the concept of an immortal soul in man....The Enlightenment of the Buddha modified the idea of a transmigrating "soul," but the principle of rebirth remains one of the central doctrines of Buddhism. It is this, together with the law of Karma: "as ye sow, so shall ye reap"—which gives Buddhism its moral code. These two principles together explain all the anomalies of life and the problem of evil and suffering in the world.

In India it was generally believed that the goal of religious life was to obtain ul-

timate knowledge, or illumination, which most of the sects conceived to be an identification of oneself with the supreme Godhead, the impersonal Absolute, or Brahman...

When the Prince Siddhartha renounced the world to become a religious ascetic he placed himself successively under two teachers of the Vedic and Upanishadic schools and mastered all that they were able to teach concerning union with the Brahman, both in theory and meditational practice. He succeeded, in fact, in obtaining that identification with the highest consciousness which was considered to be the final goal of the religious experience. In after years, when He was the Buddha, He was able to tell the Brahmins of his day that He was to be numbered among those who had known the highest spiritual state, that He was...one who had "seen Brahma face to face."

But this, he found, was not enough. Even on the highest spiritual plane the...gods were not completely liberated from the processes of life and death; they were still subject to change, and hence to uncertainty and suffering. What he desired was a state completely outside all the categories of existence and non-existence, utterly free from all the bonds of conditioned being. So, although most men would have been content to accept the highest religious norm of the time...he was not satisfied, but driven by an inner compulsion he had to seek fresh ways of attainment and a goal beyond that of the Vedas and Upanishads.

After six years of intense striving He at last found Himself in possession of the Great Truth, and it was then that He became the Buddha. He found that the faith He had entertained in a state of absolute liberation, a state in which the conditions of birth and death...could never re-establish themselves, had been justified. This state is called "Nirvana," and is attained by the extinction of all the life-asserting and death-bringing qualities of self-hood,...by the total elimination of all those craving instincts that bind us to the life-process and so cause repeated rebirths in this and other realms....

Earnestness is the path of Nirvana; thoughtlessness the path of death. Those who are in earnest do not die; those who are thoughtless are as if dead already.

— Buddha.

THE POWER OF THOUGHT

By Ralph C. Olson, D.D.

While on visits to several temples of worship, I was deeply impressed with the motto over one of the rostrums, which read: *GOD ANSWERS PRAYER.* If we realized that God constantly answers all our prayers, we would try very hard to understand what prayer is and how it works. Therefore in our discussion we will look very carefully at some of the requirements that are necessary to successfully practice this art, and also try to understand the great power that results from the cumulative effect of many small positive prayers.

Positive thinking is the scientific form of prayer. It is the active indication of the presence of reality and Truth. Thinking of a positive nature presupposes the existence of the principle of Truth. Yet the weight and inertia of some negative conditions demand a careful selection of the best method to efficiently bring about a change to positive, constructive ones.

Naturally, the first and foremost thought should be to admit the existence and reality of the positive side of life. Positive thoughts begin the work of reconstruction, and positive actions finish it. Thus prayer and action come together and make us complete.

There is no doubt that every student of Truth realizes and uses in varying degrees the power of positive thinking, but most of us believe that positive thoughts and actions must be big, powerful, or awe-inspiring, and that the one who demonstrates them must be strong, of determined character and impressive educational background. We are inclined to believe that this is the type of man who possesses positive thoughts and actions. A worldly regard for the big, the strong and the learned is so often encountered that frail and simple persons fail to inspire positive respect in us. This is very wrong and it costs us a great deal of time and energy to learn this; and many of us never learn that there is positive power in small words and actions. Is it not strange that many people think that in doing a good deed it is necessary to do something big? They have no idea of the power of small positive thoughts and actions consistently performed over a period of time.

Another widely held view

is that only men are positive in character because they are big and strong, and that women are negative because they are frail and weak. The case is quite the opposite. Women are more positive than men because they have a better appreciation of small thoughts and actions and the patience to await the results—which they often know in advance because of their psychic and intuitive nature.

Spiritual thought may be described as the application of an age-old but little understood principle of the Power of Prayer: *Go within and commune with thy True Self, and thy desires which are for good shall be made manifest.* The extraordinary power released by thought has an infinite potential of expression. It can initiate or terminate action; it can either take us to a situation or bring the same to us. In the spiritual realm pure thought works independently of the material limitations of time, distance and dimension, and its function in expanding mental horizons through a development and enlightenment of human beings is a most thrilling chapter in the book of life.

All habits, good or bad, are formed through *thought*, and all habits also can be changed through the application of thought. Mind and body work together—one helps or hinders the other according to circumstances and conditions.

The study of the mechanism of fear tells us that thoughts of fear create chemical changes in the body that are detrimental to our health. On the other hand good thoughts, especially those of love, bring health to us along with happiness. Fear is built upon doubt and doubt comes from ignorance. The combination of thought and knowledge drives away all fear. The power of positive thoughts defeats ignorance, dispels doubt, and makes man into a fearless spiritual being.

A regular application of positive thoughts develops a source of personal power that cannot be duplicated in any other manner. If you visit an outstanding personality you find that just being near such a person is a source of inspiration, and in a short time you begin to understand how his power has been built up through the constant application of constructive thought. Once having been close to such a person you will never again be the same. We need only one contact with them and that alone changes our viewpoint of life.

What do we first notice in

such people? The answer is the same in every case.

You will find lives extremely simple, lived in perfect harmony with all life. You will find minds that have gone through the fires of all fears, temptations and trials of the world and have come out as pure as gold. You will find a manner of speaking that is sweet, pure and of childlike simplicity. Among such people there is seldom the appearance of big powerful ideas, yet their work will have power, but it will be the power of simplicity. Their speech will have sweetness, but it will be the sweetness of understanding.

Adapt a simple thought, apply it regularly, and that application of positive thought radiating into space will travel around the world and back to you. All the equipment you need is faith in yourself, an appreciation of the worth in others, and a realization of the strength in small things, especially thoughts and actions. You are already provided with a body, consciousness, sense organs, and faculties of mind. You have the ability to become attuned with the Infinite and send out over the ether waves your own message of good will. Be careful that your thoughts are of a positive nature, be sure you are sending out love if you want to receive love in return. For you will reap their effects whether they are good or bad.

Thoughts are things to be guarded as precious jewels. Thoughts are delicate creatures which we must protect with our maternal and parental instincts. They are our children who grow up to be our guardians. They pierce our comprehension. They break into our hearts with the force of dynamite, bringing resolutions and active power. They surround us with their perfume and lift us into the realms of happiness.

Raise your vibrations high into the heaven of Love and Truth.

In all sincerity, ask for what you desire: Health—Love—Knowledge with Understanding...When properly attuned with the Infinite Thought, God, all is yours for the asking. *All this is the Power of Thought.*

The key to every man is his thought. Sturdy and defying though he look, he has a helm which he obeys, which is the idea after which all his facts are classified. He can only be reformed by showing him a new idea which commands his own. — Emerson.

SELF-SACRIFICE

By Harry Halsey Starrett

More and more as I go along through life I realize the true significance of the divine attribute of Self-Sacrifice.

It is indeed lamentable that this sublime quality is so rarely manifest in the lives of men. So many proclaim to the world, "I am a Christian," who do not walk in the footsteps of the Master; unmindful of the countless opportunities for service that surround them, which, if they availed themselves of them, would transform their lives and lift them up out of this visible world of illusion into the invisible world of Reality; out of darkness into the Light; out of death into the fullness of life. For, verily, he who lives for himself alone does not live at all. It is only by losing ourselves completely in the service of others that we find ourselves reborn in a new and better life—Life Everlasting.

To know a thing we must become one with that thing; to understand life we must become one with life; to know God we must realize our oneness with God. Man's only hope for redemption and the entrance into the "joy of his Lord" is through renunciation—complete surrender of himself and his all to the Father in Heaven which gave him all. When a man arrives at the stage in his spiritual growth where he realizes that nothing he has belongs to him alone but to all, and that the true Life consists in giving rather than in getting, in sharing rather than in having, then and not until then will he know the real meaning of life. One of the hardest if not the hardest lesson for most men to learn is the lesson of Sacrifice, and until he learns and puts this into practice in his daily living he will make very little if any spiritual progress.

All giving is commendable but the gift worthwhile is that which involves the giving of ourselves for the good of others. *Sacrifice* is the key which releases God's illimitable supply to meet our every need and keeps the channel open between man and God, and makes the flow of God's abundance through us continuous. Give and we keep the channel open; hoard and we block it, and shut off God's help.

ETERNITY IN THE HEART

By Rev. Roy Wallace Thomas

In Mrs. Gaskell's biography of Charlotte Brontë appears a letter of Miss Brontë to a friend in which she asks the latter if she has read a certain book just off the press. "It is the first exposition of avowed atheism and materialism I have ever read; the first unequivocal declaration of disbelief in the existence of a God or a future life I have ever seen."

After confessing her inability to banish the feeling of horror the book had awakened, she adds: "Sincerely do I wish to find and know the truth; but if this be Truth, well may she guard herself with mysteries, and cover herself with a veil. If this be Truth, man or woman who beholds her can but curse the day he or she was born."

We are not to understand that Charlotte Brontë meant to disparage life, even though her own is one of the saddest in the annals of literature. Her mother died when she was but a child, leaving a family of six small children. The two oldest died in girlhood from disease due to cruel, unhygienic conditions at the boarding school where they were sent, and in the same way Charlotte was injured for life. The parsonage home where she was reared stood on a bleak Yorkshire hill, and was surrounded on three sides by a gloomy cemetery.

Her brilliant brother died in the flower of his youth from dissipation due to drink and drugs. Before ten more months had passed, her two remaining sisters were mortally stricken with tuberculosis. With the companions of her youth snatched away almost at one stroke, she was left in awful solitude in the lonely house at the edge of the cemetry, to care for her aged and nearly blind father.

A few years later she married her father's faithful vicar, and a year afterward lay upon her deathbed. As her husband sat at her bedside earnestly praying for God to spare her, she awoke from her stupor, and looking into his face, she whispered: "Oh! I am not going to die, am I? He will not separate us, we have been so happy!"

Her life, though strangely circumscribed and terribly afflicted with heart-rending trials and bereavements, yet had the consciousness of joyous achievement, the recompense of love and friendship, the taste of both intellectu-

al and spiritual beauty, and she found, after all, that this is a good world. It is good enough to stay in a little while longer. And so do most of us find it. Despite the pain, heartache, desolation, failure, and tragedy that in one form or another are universal to the experience of mankind, we all vote to remain in this world our allotted time. In this we do well.

This is a good world. It has its darkness, but "God gave us the night in order to show us the stars." He gave us toil that we might know the joy and recompense of harvest. He gave us suffering that we might know the bliss and sweetness of rest. God gave us everything but sin. That arises from our own self-perversion. The woes of sin are self-inflicted. And God permits sin that we might know the surpassing rapture of mercy and forgiveness. In the sands that are washed up by the river of time, there are rare gems and nuggets of finest gold that each man may have for his own if he will but take the trouble to sift them out. It is possible so to live that the days will bring to each of us enrichment *"as new ore from some enchanted mine,"* to quote Henley.

Yet at its best this world is inadequare and incomplete. The human heart is a miracle. You may place the whole universe in it and have room to spare. We may take the wings of fancy and fly from solar system to solar system, and from star to star, lost in awe at the mystery and majesty of God's limitless handiwork, and the heart will stand on the outskirts of space and cry, "More! More!" Those who have become cloyed with the wealth of matter we call gold, the wealth of intellect we call knowledge, or the wealth of power we call fame, shout from the shores of time, "More! More!" Small wonder it is, for God "hath set eternity in their heart," *(Eccles. 3: 11)*. The hunger of the heart can be satisfied only by the wealth of eternity we call love.

The finite mind has no measure for eternity. To say that "eternity is endless duration" is to display our inability to comprehend eternity. "Endless duration" tells of time, not of eternity. Time and space are forms of thought which the mind imposes upon itself in the effort to comprehend reality, but time and space are appearance, not reality itself. Eternal life is a quality of existence in the Here and Now that is beyond the here and

now of space and time.

Our divinest opportunity is present renewal through the dynamic presence of God creating in us, as we respond, the quality of the eternal. In this way we experience the eternal under the present order of time and space. Time belongs to the present phase of our existence and is somewhat like a curtain which hides eternity. At death the curtain parts and time and space fade away, revealing the eternal in its glory. Then time will be swallowed up in the Eternal Now, which we experience by faith through surrender to the Source. Then will reality be revealed as it is.

Love is our experience of eternity under the order of time and sense. By "love" we do not mean that partial concept often expressed in the statement, "Love is not enough." Love is the living content which the New Testament gives to the eternal when it say, "God is Love." We mean love in the profound sense that Jesus pictured it when he said: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and, you shall love your neighbor as yourself." This love is a function of the entire self and includes intelligence. It is intelligent love.

Our bodies have their day and cease to be because they, like the grass of the field, are creatures of time. Our souls, our real selves, which are subject not to the laws of matter but to the laws of spirit, wing forth to be entrusted with new instruments, on grander courses of achievement. Death is the portal where we lay down the tools that are too crude for any world but this. The portal of eternal destiny, ever at hand and ever open, is the soul's power of spiritual surrender. More significant than death is the renewal which follows the soul's surrender to the qualities that are eternal.

...Oh! that I might repose on Thee! Oh! that Thou wouldest enter into my heart, and inebriate it, that I may forget my ills, and embrace Thee, my sole good! What are Thou to me, O Lord?...Or what am I to Thee, that thou shouldest command me to love Thee, Yea, and to be angry with me, and threaten to lay huge miseries upon me, if I love Thee not?...

— St. Augustine.

A LETTER TO FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

"...The June issue has some excellent articles on understanding the technique of prayer. And I liked Carlyle's character sketch of Mohammed whose eager mind searched to find answers to life's mysteries and finally had the experience, during that month passed in solitude and prayer, which brought him total faith in the 'one Great God, in and over All!' Today it is likely that the majority of mankind does believe in the one Great Creator, but one wonders what proportion of people spend much time in prayer—not many of us have as good a record as the faithful Moslems.

"The hard facts of our modern world's time-pressures on daily living have largely pushed aside family worship with prayer. It is just not found in the modern pattern. But it may be that many people, more and more of them, are responding to that inner light, that inborn spiritual spark deep within our being—spontaneous, wordless prayer!

"Perhaps FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER could ask for comments on this, could recognize its possibilities, and promote enthusiasm for this vital and sacred emotion. How urgently do we need such an awakening for our present world's fears and loveless plight, with its brooding threat of possible total destruction. Let us recall that it was during our country's very prosperous years, when it was forging ahead as the top nation in wealth and scientific attainments, that such secular independence came and a trend took over—God was not essential! But now, facing the crisis of world bewilderment and menacing fears, are not men again feeling the deep need of Divine Guidance for our United States and allies—and yes, a concern for all mankind's welfare?

"And so is it not a crucial time to encourage deep vital prayer to an all-wise Providence, to the God of the Nations, to our understanding Creator! This may indeed be a strategic time to win people to this urgent need for divine guidance and wise action in a world-wide emergency..."

-- Anna Grace Sawyer,
Chicago.

Book Review

THE PROPHETIC VOICE IN MODERN FICTION, by William R. Mueller; Association Press, New York, 1959, 183 pp; $3.50

This book has the unusual thesis that in our time certain novelists have made the deepest explorations of universal religious problems, that themes like the Fall of Man, Judgment, Suffering and Love have absorbed the attention and talents of these writers more creatively, and with more important results for us, than any other group.

The challenge of this idea attracted us to the book, but except at rare moments it fails to live up to the promise of its title, partly because it would take a truly great writer in his own right to accomplish this, and partly because the author's viewpoint is theological and dogmatic, in the traditional manner that has become unacceptable to increasing numbers of people living in an era in which man's mind as well as his geography is expanding. (For example, he seems to regard as literal many incidents and passages in the Bible which, one feels, were meant to be received as symbolic or allegorical: a tendency which leads to, among other things, the tragedy of exclusiveness.) This viewpoint is something of a shock to discover, for the book's imaginative theme leads one to anticipate a more subtle and compassionate approach to the great problems the author chooses to discuss.

Of the six books he treats, each of which is concerned with the resolution of some great religious problem, four are worth noting: Albert Camus' *The Fall*, Franz Kafka's *The Trial*, William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, and Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter*. His treatment of the Camus book, in particular, is penetratingly handled, with a minimum of the doctrinal intrusions that deface the other chapters.

We could recommend Mr. Mueller's book to our more literary-minded readers, with the reservations noted above. On the following page we present a few paragraphs from the introduction, where the author's purpose is stated with succinct persuasiveness. The opening pages are the most suggestive and valuable in the book, and we cite excerpts from them in the hope that some readers may be inspired to seek similar horizons of their own. »»»»

From William R. Mueller's THE PROPHETIC VOICE IN MODERN FICTION

"...A man may come most directly to a knowledge of himself when he sees himself anatomized in a contemporary setting and in an idiom... which is of his own time. The voices of the past few decades which have pierced most decisively to the heart of the matter, penetrating most deeply into the anxieties of our generation and expressing most precisely our fears and hopes, have been those of the literary artists, and it is perhaps...in the modern novel that we find the anatomy of our own age drawn with greatest clarity.

"The best of the twentieth century novelists may... lay claim to the title of latter day prophets; for the health, or lack thereof, of our civilization is most accurately bodied forth in their words, just as the pulse of ancient Israel was most sensitively examined and expressed by the Old Testament prophets. Those of us who somehow suspect that all is not well, and who know that we are ill without knowing the temper of our disease, will find our condition nowhere more expertly diagnosed than in the pages of the most perceptive novelists of our time..."

"The story of our age is told...most eloquently in its imaginative literature, and if much of that literature points to the absence of man's encounter with God, it also points to the human situation which makes such an encounter so rare. The novels under study are hardly overflowing with a cheery optimism, but they serve as a sane counterbalance today to those desperate voices which invoke enthusiastically the "man up there," or argue that the frequent oral repetition of biblical phrases may...increase the incanter's sales power, or suggest that a good deed a day keeps the devil away. Few of us would choose to live in Kafka's world or in Faulkner's, but if we in fact do live in a world of frustration and violence far removed from... the covers of the *Saturday Evening Post*, it is well that we know it. One can hardly reach a cherished destination if he does not know his point of departure. Our point of departure, I suspect, is most accurately chronicled by our novelists; our destination is the divine-human encounter which is our salvation. The novelist will not save us, but he may well bring us to the knowledge that we are in need of salvation..."

NOTICES and COMMENTS

CIRCULATION NEWS. We have subscribers in every section of the country, but with a still limited office staff we will be concentrating efforts at new circulation, for the immediate future, in a few major urban areas. The four cities where we are currently best represented are New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Readers of FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER in those areas, especially, who may be able to increase circulation on their own initiative, or who would like further information on the subject, are urged to contact us. Signs of progress have been noted in preliminary groups working in Chicago and Los Angeles, which leads us to hope that we can intensify the effort in both cities, as well as in New York and San Francisco.

LONDON GROUP. We wish to record with regret the passing some months ago of Charles Simpson, the founder of The Seekers in London, a worthy and dedicated prayer group that has been in friendly contact with us for a long time. This group, as well as Mr. Simpson himself, has had the admiration of our own founder, Carl A. Evans, and A. E. Johnson, our Vice President, and all of us trust that the work Mr. Simpson launched and established so well will continue for many years.

CONTRIBUTORS. We welcome the appearance in this issue of two new writers to FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER, Dr. Ralph C. Olson and Mr. Thomas E. Powers... Dr. Olson, of Pasadena, California, is represented by "The Power of Thought," a simple and inclusive presentation of a subject second to none in importance, as all of us sooner or later discover. Dr. Olson is a past dean of Sierra States University. He is a Doctor of Divinity, a past Master of the Rosicrucian Order and is, we are told by an authoritative source, held in high esteem by his friends and students. He is now retired from active work but will, we hope, continue to enchance our pages with his thoughtful essays from time to time...Mr. Powers is an advertising man and free lance writer residing in Chappaqua, New York. His first piece for us, "The Secret is to Surrender," marks a memorable debut in our pages. Few articles of any length we have ever printed have said so much in so brief a space. This did not surprise us after reading his re-

cently published, FIRST QUESTIONS ON THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, which is, we feel, one of the most important and original works on the spiritual life ever to appear in this country. This book was reviewed with as much enthusiasm as we could communicate in the June number. If any reader has difficulty getting it he may order either directly from the publisher, Harper & Brothers, or from Fellowship in Prayer... In a few months we shall commence preparation of the 15 outstanding articles and poems published in our ten years of existence. These will be reprinted as part of the big June 1960 Anniversary issue and will later be collected in a separate booklet to be used to attract new subscribers. Rev. Roy Wallace Thomas' distinguished and superbly written "Eternity in The Heart," printed in this number, brought the idea back to mind, for his essay will undoubtedly be one of our all-time selections... The consistently high standard of A. E. Johnson's poetry will also be represented in such a selection, although in this number Prof. Johnson makes one of his rare appearances in prose with "Self-Answering Prayer." In this short but concentrated essay he demonstrates that he is equally at home in either medium... Swami Ritajananda's provocative article on "The Need of a Spiritual Revival," which suggested to us the editorial for this issue, was recently delivered as an address at the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center in New York. What we have been privileged to print is a condensation of that address... ...The author of the arresting prayer on the cover was 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the son of the founder of the Baha'i World Faith movement and a great religious teacher in his own right... Anna Grace Sawyer, whose letter is printed on page 23 of this issue, is an active member of the Chicago group, referred to above, that is working toward increased circulation of the magazine... We call your attention to a leaflet enclosed in this issue inviting manuscripts on any aspect of religious life, including prayer experiences. The acquisition of new writers is an important part of our plan to improve the magazine from every standpoint. We hope that this leaflet helps us in the effort.

BOOK REVIEWS. Whenever unsigned book reviews appear in FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER it should be understood that they represent the opinion of the Editor and are reviewed by him.

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Let nothing disturb thee;
Let nothing dismay thee:
All things pass;
God never changes.
Patience attains
All that it strives for.
He who has God
Finds he lacks nothing:
God alone suffices.

— *St. Teresa of Avila*
(1515-1582)

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